



CHRISTMAS EVE COMMUNION

*We are a community of believers who seek
to grow in our faith and understanding as
we live the Way of Jesus Christ.*

The First Baptist Church

A Welcoming and Affirming Church

Worcester, Massachusetts

December 24, 2009

11:00 PM

CHRISTMAS EVE COMMUNION

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*Please turn pagers and cell phones to silent mode.
Nursery care is available for children during the worship service.
Please speak to one of the ushers for assistance.*

PRELUDE Alfred Burt Carols

*CHRISTMAS CAROL MEDLEY

- 185 Hark! the Herald Angels Sing (stanzas 1 & 3) Mendelssohn
191 It Came upon the Midnight Clear (stanzas 1 & 3) Carol
225 I Wonder as I Wander (stanzas 1, 2, 3 & hum melody once) I Wonder as I Wander

*GREETING

Leader: Welcome to this holy time and place, a time when we remember and celebrate the birth of the Christ child. It is a candlelight service, because Christ is the light of the world. It is a communion service, because we all seek that light. Let us greet one another in Christian love.

[Greeting one another]

Gathering Song:

***Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
the stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.***

***The cattle are lowing, the Baby awakes, but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.***

***Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay close by me forever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,
and fit us for heaven to live with thee there.***

CALL TO RECONCILIATION

Leader: We begin with such great hopes, such great dreams. We are going to be better, to treat others more fairly, to love more deeply. But we come to the manger once again, knowing our failings, and aware of our brokenness. Let us confess to the One who comes, that our lives might be made new.

ALL: God who comes to us, we pray for forgiveness when our shadowed lives dim your light; when the tinsel of Christmas means more to us than your presence; when our hearts of stone resist the pain and brokenness around us; when we care more about what is under the tree, than the damage we do to your creation and your children. Heal us and this world, O God, so that

we might tear down the walls we have built to keep your love away. Help us to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God, so that we may become cradles for your love seen in Christ our Savior, in whose name we pray. AMEN.

[Silent prayer]

ALL SINGING:

*Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and with fear and trembling stand;
ponder nothing earthly minded, for with blessing in his hand
Christ our Lord to earth descendeth, our full homage to demand.*

THE OFFERING

Offertory Duet *In the Bleak Midwinter*.....Harold Darke
1888-1976

THE READING OF HOLY SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:1-14 (pg. 832)

MEDITATIONThomas R. McKibbens

A SERVICE OF COMMUNION

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

We open our hearts to God.

It is right to give thanks to the One who offers abundant life.

This is the night our hearts burst open with joy, this is the evening grace pours out, this is the moment when you, O God, make all things new. You shaped light out of the shadows of chaos, and molded your children from the earth, breathing your Spirit into our lungs. Your love never fails; your compassion is never taken away from us. So, on this night when heaven reaches down to caress creation with healing, we join the angel choirs who sang your glory, and with your people of every time and place, we carol the good news that is ours tonight:

**Glory to the newborn King! Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!**

Holiness is who you are, God of Christmas, and blessings come in Jesus Christ, your child of grace. Finding no warm welcome at his birth, he knew the cold shoulder of friends at his death; born in the rude confines of a barn, he knew the suffering of your children; sent to be your Word made flesh, he calls us to follow him into your Way; proclaimed to be the Prince of Peace, he died by human violence. By his present spirit among us, you give us new life. So, as we gather on this holiest of nights, we proclaim his glory:

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace....

(Continued on next page)

Pour out your Spirit upon us, O God, and on the gifts you have given us. We lift the broken bread, praying that we would be made whole, at peace with one another, and reconciled with you. As we drink from the vineyard of grace, we are one with your Spirit, and our spirits are refreshed by Christ's compassion for all who suffer. As we taste the promise of the feast you prepare for us in your kingdom, may we live for you and serve your children, as we have been served by the child of Christmas, Jesus Christ, our Savior. AMEN.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

On the night of his betrayal, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, *This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.* In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, *This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.*

Lord, as we gather at your table on this sacred eve, accept us as we are, even in all our imperfections.

Jesus said, *Come unto me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.*

All is now ready; let us keep the feast!

The congregation is invited to come forward to receive communion, after which you are invited to light a candle and form a circle of light.

***CAROL 186** Silent Night! Holy Night! Stille Nacht

**Silent night! Holy Night! All is calm, all is bright
'round yon virgin mother and child; holy infant so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.**

**Silent night! Holy Night! Shepherds quake at the sight,
glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing alleluia;
Christ the Savior is born! Christ the Savior is born!**

**Silent night! Holy Night! Son of God, love's pure light,
radiant beams from thy holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.**

***BENEDICTION**

CLOSING MUSIC *Silent Night* Franz Gruber
1787-1863

**Those who are able may stand.*

*Natalie Aalto, soprano; James Hecox, guitar; Mark Hecox, saxophone;
David Johnson, technical director; William Ness, midi;
Sarah Sams, flute; David Story, tenor*